



# FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT

# Update



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## Greetings!


Welcome to the first issue of the *Forest Plan Amendment Update* newsletter. This newsletter will be sent out periodically to keep you informed as the Black Hills National Forest goes through the processes of amending its Forest Plan.

The Forest will be initiating scoping on an amendment soon, and would like your input into the process. The following is some background on why the Forest is doing an amendment so soon after completing its forest planning process.

The 1997 Revised Forest Plan decision was issued in June of 1997. (This revised the original Plan approved in 1983.) The 1997 Revised Forest Plan was appealed, and in October 1999 Forest Service Deputy Chief Jim Furnish upheld the Forest on 25 of 27 specific appeal issues. On the remaining two issues, the Forest was upheld with instructions. One issue, involving recreational mining, requires only minor rewording to address satisfactorily.

The primary appeal issue returned to the Forest deals with identified deficiencies in protecting species

viability<sup>1</sup> and biodiversity<sup>2</sup>. The Forest is initiating an analysis of these areas to determine what additional forest plan direction is needed. It is estimated that this reanalysis will take from 2 to 5 years.

For the Forest to continue making project decisions until the re-evaluation is complete, the Deputy Chief provided the Forest with "interim direction" under which the forest could operate until the deficiencies were corrected. Interim Direction contains specific instructions to protect species viability and diversity. 

## The Amendment Process- Phase I and Phase II

The Forest proposes to complete the required adjustments to the 1997 Revised Forest Plan in two phases. Both phases will allow for public involvement; each decision will be appealable.

The intent of Phase I is to adopt measures in the short term that will enable the Forest to make limited project decisions while maintaining future management options. Phase I will result in a NEPA document to

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<sup>1</sup> Species viability is the persistence of plants and animals present over the long term.

<sup>2</sup> Biodiversity is the variety of plants and animals present due to the presence of the variety of ecosystems.

# The Science:

## Expert Interviews

Science processes that accompanied recent large scale planning efforts such as the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project and the Tongass Land Management Plan have set higher standards for evaluating species viability. The Forest looked at those efforts and adapted their processes to the smaller scale of the Black Hills. In order to ensure that the forest's scientific process was credible and would adequately support the amendment process, the Forest consulted with Dr. Barry Noon of Colorado State University, a noted conservation biologist and member of the Committee of Scientists.

Forest biologists interviewed scientific experts from various Federal agencies, State government agencies, and other organizations with recognized species-specific expertise or expertise in population ecology. Two to four experts were interviewed for each species or species group. Species included in the Phase I analysis were Region 2 sensitive species that occur or are likely to occur on the Black Hills National Forest. In an effort to facilitate discussions, similar species were grouped together where possible to form logical interview topics. For example, cavity-dependant species formed one group and plants were evaluated as another. Goshawk and marten were not grouped with other species because they are specific issues to forest management and had the potential to over-shadow other species if included in a larger group.

Expert interviews were conducted for the species/groups shown in *Table 1*. The objectives of the interviews were to:

- ☐ Assess current conditions for each of the sensitive species
- ☐ Assess effects to those species from specific management activities identified under the Forest Plan and Interim Direction
- ☐ Assess the overall effect of the combined management activities to each species over the next 5 years
- ☐ Obtain information on other measures that would be more effective, providing a basis for an alternative, if the experts indicated that Forest Plan and Interim Direction were inadequate
- ☐ Obtain information on effective inventory and monitoring techniques

Summaries of the interviews will be available as soon as the scoping period for the Phase I amendment begins.



## THE PROCESS

- ✓ Revised Forest Plan 1997
- ✓ Decision on Appeals of Forest Plan October 1999
- ✓ Interim Direction Given

- ✓ Phase I Starts



**Phase I**  
Develop preliminary alternative(s) to address Appeal Decision & Interim Direction

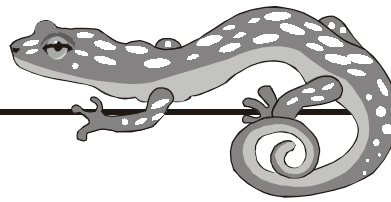
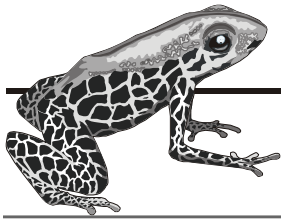
Expert interviews to address the science of species viability & biodiversity of the Black Hills

**Phase I**  
Develop another preliminary alternative to incorporate outcomes from the expert interviews.

**Phase I**  
30 day public scoping currently scheduled to start late-October, 2000

Respond to scoping by identifying key issues related to biodiversity and species viability.





**Table 1. Groups and Species Discussed During Interviews**

**Plants**

- American Trailplant (*Adenocaulon bicolor*)
- Southern Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*)
- Arnica lonchophylla (*Northern arnica*)
- Prairie Moonwort (*Botrychium campstre*)
- Fox Tail Sedge (*Carex alopecoidea*)
- Greater Bladder Sedge (*Carex intumescens*)
- Long-stalk Sedge (*Carex pedunculata*)
- Autumn Coralroot (*Corallorhiza odontorhiza*)
- Giant Helleborine (*Epipactus gigantea*)
- Dwarf Scouring Rush (*Equisetum scirpoides*)
- Trailing Clubmoss (*Lycopodium complanatum*)
- Treelike Clubmoss (*Lycopodium dendroideum*)
- Marsh Muhly (*Muhlenbergia glomerata*)
- Large Roundleaf Orchid (*Platanthera orbiculata*)
- Autumn Willow (*Salix serissima*)
- Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)
- Woolrush (*Scirpus cyperinus*)
- Great-spurred Violet (*Viola selkirkii*)

**Mammals**

- American Marten (*Martes americana*)

**Bats**

- Fringe-tailed Myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*)
- Townsend's Big-eared Bat (*Plecotus townsendii*)

**Other Mammals**

- Dwarf Shrew (*Sorex nanus*)
- Swift Fox (*Vulpes velox*)

**Birds**

- Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)

**Woodpeckers**

- Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)
- Northern Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*)
- Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*)

**Other Birds**

- Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*)
- Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*)
- Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*)
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)
- Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus borealis*)
- Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)
- Purple Martin (*Progne subis*)
- Pygmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*)
- Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)

**Reptiles**

- Black Hills Red-bellied Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata pahasapae*)
- Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*)

**Amphibians**

- Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*)
- Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*)

**Butterflies**

- Regal Fritillary (*Speyeria idalia*)
- Tawny Crescent (*Phyciodes batesii*)

**Snails**

- Cooper's Rocky Mountain Snail (*Oreohelix strigosa cooperi*)
- Striate Disc (*Discus shemiki*)

**Phase I**  
Refine alternatives/develop  
new alternatives if needed  
from scoping process

**Phase I**  
Environmental assessment  
completed

**Phase I**  
Decision by the  
Regional Forester to  
select one alternative.

- ☐ Legal Notice of Decision
- ☐ 45 Day Appeal Period
- ☐ Appeal Decision from WO 160 Days  
from the Filing Date of Last Appeal






## The Amendment Process- (cont.)


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amend the 1997 Revised Forest Plan for the short term. Pre-work for Phase I efforts has been underway for several months. This pre-work was to 1) assess what parts of the appeal decision could be addressed with Interim Direction and what parts needed to be addressed with a Plan amendment, 2) review the existing Plan and Interim Direction with expert interviews, 3) develop preliminary alternatives to focus public involvement. Scoping will occur in late October and a decision on Phase I is expected in the early part of 2001.

Phase II will more fully address the issues of biodiversity and species viability. This phase will get underway this winter, and will take two or more years to complete. The Phase II amendment may include new goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, monitoring requirements, and management area changes. In addition, the allowable sale quantity of timber may need to be recalculated. 

## The Website

Documents relating to the Black Hills Forest Plan Amendment are now available on the Internet. The location of the website is: [www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills/), from Forest Programs, go to Forest Planning.

Individuals and groups that have traditionally received this type of information in the mail will continue to be on the mailing list. Anyone wishing to be added to or deleted from the mailing list can do so by contacting Peggy Woodward at 605-673-2251. 

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